

Going Global with GOER

New computer program shortens operational environmental planning process from months to minutes

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AFSOC Public Affairs

Special operators can now quickly assess the impact of environmental and cultural conditions at deployed locations in just 30 minutes thanks to a new computer program developed by the Air Force Special Operations Command Environmental Division at Hurlburt Field, FL. The Global Operational Environmental Review (GOER) computer program streamlines the environmental impact

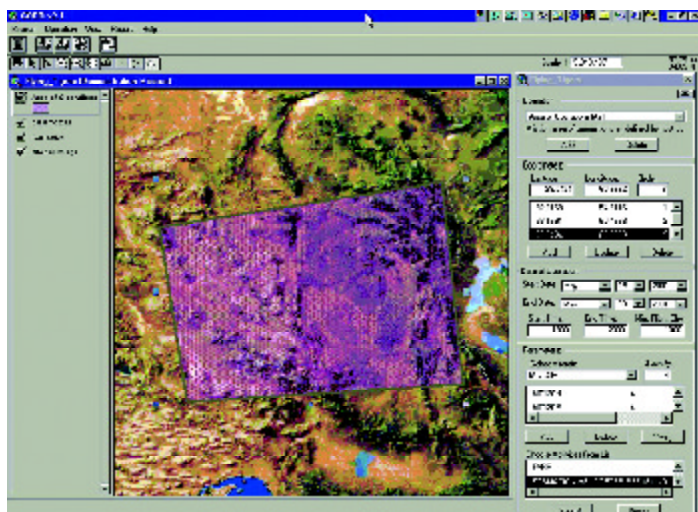
review process, which can currently take up to three months to prepare.

"The Department of Defense is limited in its ability to quickly analyze and review potential environmental and legal impacts of a deployment or mission," said Mike Applegate, AFSOC Environmental Division chief. "Consequently, deployments or missions that require short notice to plan and execute aren't getting properly evaluated prior to execution for potential environmental impacts."

Developed to provide a required environmental review capability on short notice in a secure or deployed location, the GOER program can also be expanded to meet all routine mission and exercise planning.

"The program is designed to allow the user to input information such as base camp location, airframes to be used, activities to be conducted, and duration of these activities; it will then generate an environmental impact statement based on the provided information," said Anita Allen, a biologist with CH2M Hill, the primary development contractor.

According to Mr. Applegate, the program also identifies cultural concerns for the impacted area. "The program takes into account not only environmental concerns such as type of soil, endangered animals, and climate, but makes cultural considerations as well. Once the information is entered into the program, it will highlight cultural landmarks, no fly zones, and religious holidays that need to be



The GOER program can be used during the operational planning phase to quickly and easily review the potential environmental and legal impacts of Defense Department missions and deployments. The above screenshot shows sample inputs. (Courtesy HQ AFSOC/CEV)

The U.S. Air Force has launched several new initiatives to provide warfighters with unprecedented awareness of the mission situation. The Headquarters Air Force Geo Integration Office (HAF GIO) was recently established within the Readiness and Installation Support Division of the Office of The Civil Engineer to ensure innovative mapping architectures from various combat support sectors are integrated to maximize mission effectiveness at minimum cost. GOER can be a vital environmental complement to the GeoBase operational framework that is being assembled by the new HAF GIO to support Air Force basing support requirements. The GOER architecture was designed according to DoD guidelines to ensure interoperability with both Air Force and joint information solutions such as the Global Combat Support System. By tailoring their Unit Type Codes/Equipment and Mission Profile databases, the flexible GOER architecture will deliver situational insights to other Air Force operational elements and deliver the right information at the right time in the right format to help warfighters make the right decision.

considered when planning an operation in any area.”

“We’re trying to operationalize the environmental process,” said Col Michael Hrapla, The Civil Engineer, AFSOC. “We’re doing this by developing a tool that automates a significant portion of the environmental review process, streamlines and prioritizes critical information needed by mission commanders and planners, and provides this information in a seamless, transparent manner to reduce any additional workload.

“Forces today are required to accomplish their mission in an environmentally sensitive way in operations worldwide — this tool will provide that capability quickly, accurately and efficiently for our special operations commanders.”

Currently, the GOER program has been developed for the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility (AOR). Applegate hopes to have a fully operationally capable global GOER program developed by 2003, covering all five AORs.

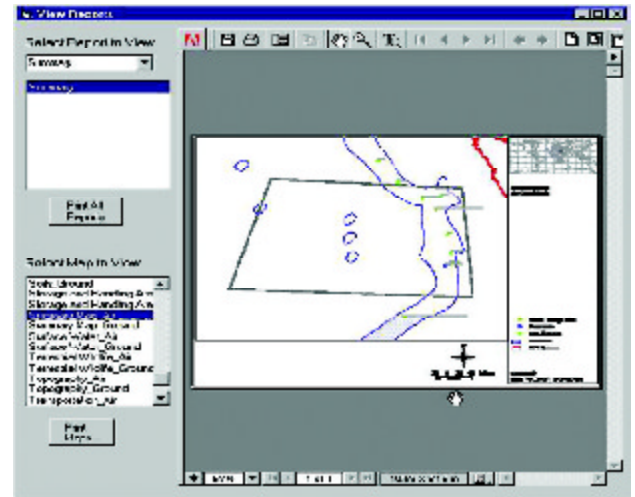
Why Go with GOER?

One benefit of the program is that anyone can use it because there are only four requirements for input: location, including latitude and longitude; mission duration; equipment to be used; and the planned activity. After this information is loaded into the computer, the program produces three separate reports — a commander’s summary, an environmental review report and a synopsis of applicable regulations.

The commander’s summary is a color-coded, quick-look report summary that reflects three degrees of probable impact significance. Green indicates no significant environmental issues, yellow represents some significant but easily correctable environmental impacts, and red indicates potentially complex environmental or

Several partners and contractors are assisting AFSOC with development of GOER. Each has a unique role to play. As the proponent, AFSOC created the concept and is providing development leadership to contractors. AFSOC created and provided the software logic, legal hierarchy and legal analysis to contractors to use in building GOER. Further, AFSOC will test system protocol and conduct field tests.

The Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence is providing personnel for direct program management and development support including development planning, troubleshooting, budget estimating and tracking, and assisting in technical reporting. Air Staff has provided project development and management support money. The Army Corps of Engineers is providing GOER contract management over CH2M Hill, the primary development contractor and system integrator. Universe Technologies, Inc. and ANSER Corp. are providing AFSOC with in-house technical project management and personnel support. Earth Tech Inc. is conducting research on and creating a database of the Alpine Biome.



A sample of the reports generated by GOER — a combined issues map.

legal issues that would normally require input from an environmental professional.

The second report, the environmental review, is produced in the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis format. This report documents the pre-deployment environmental review required by various DoD and Air Force Instructions. It provides users with details of the information provided in the commander’s summary report.

The third report provides any applicable regulations specific to the country or AOR in which the operation may occur.

According to retired Col Jerry Cruik (Anser Inc.), a former MH-60 pilot who is currently a contractor with AFSOC, the program spans the dividing lines between operational planning and environmental assessments.

“For any given deployment, it provides the operational planners and leadership with solid insight of what the environment can potentially do to both their people and their equipment. In addition, GOER points out potential legal and cultural pitfalls that planners and leadership need to be aware of,” he said.

“Without timely, accurate and correctly analyzed environmental and cultural impact data, AFSOC personnel and equipment are unnecessarily placed in harm’s way or potentially left to unintentionally commit international incidents.”

Colonel Hrapla believes the computer program and the data it provides will be useful to other DoD organizations outside the Air Force, serving as a backbone for environmental reviews in the planning stages of a deployment. Once completed, it could revolutionize the process for required stateside National Environmental Policy Act documentation by reducing the time required for data acquisition from months to minutes.

Editor’s Note: Colonel Michael Hrapla retired from the Air Force in June.